



ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SHELLFISHERIES

MINUTES OF JANUARY 15, 2019

DNREC Auditorium, 89 Kings Hwy, Dover, DE 19901
Div. of Fish & Wildlife phone: 302-739-9914



ADVISORY COUNCIL

Leonard "Limbo" Voss, Jr., Chairman
Patrick Gaffney
Virgilio Pacelli (*Absent*)
Paul Satterfield
Steven Copp
Richard S. Hand, Jr. (*Absent*)
Commercial Oystering Councilor (*Vacant*)

DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

John Clark
Stew Michels
Rich Wong
Michael Greco
Captain Nick Couch

PUBLIC

20 Visitors

Agenda Item 1. Approval of Minutes from 1/25/17, 1/10/18, 11/7/18

Chairman Voss called the meeting to order at 7:03PM and thanked everyone for their attendance. The minutes for the previous three meetings were approved without objection.

Agenda Item 2. Discuss the possible restructuring of the Shellfish Advisory Council, including the number and qualifications of Councilors

Ms. Lydia Massey, Director of Boards and Commissions, could not attend due to a scheduling conflict.

Agenda Item 3. Update on the Delaware Bay derelict crab pot removal pilot study

Nicole Rodi, Delaware Coastal Management Program, gave a presentation on project accomplishments. Ms. Rodi worked with Stockton State University to scan six miles of the nearshore Delaware Bay in the Collins Beach area using a high-resolution side scan sonar, finding 517 derelict crab pots in two sampling days that occurred in mid-December 2017 and mid-February 2018. By the time of the February sampling, 77% of derelict crab pots had moved from their December positions either by the current or winter icing. The nearshore Delaware River in the Port Penn area and an area further south of Collins Beach will be scanned in 2019.

Agenda Item 4. 2019 Oyster Stock Status and Discussion of 2019 Harvest Quota

Rich Wong, Fisheries Biometrician, reviewed the oyster commercial harvest quota-setting process, which uses the harvest control model. Spat abundance was much lower in 2018 than in 2017, but the abundance of market-sized oysters was good in 2018. Small oysters increased because of the high spat abundance in 2016 and 2017. The model recommended a 2019 harvest quota of 16,852 bushels, which is 3% higher than the 2018 quota of 16,341 bushels. Mortality of small and market oysters has been low in the last two years. Most spat recruitment occurs on the Drum, Pleasanton and Silver beds in the DE Bay. The Ridge had the lowest market abundance, but the highest harvest in 2018. Mr. Wong recommended that harvest be reduced on the Ridge, Drum and Silver beds in 2019 due to low spat settlement and lack of small oysters.

Agenda Item 5. 2018 Juvenile Crab Index and 2019 Blue Crab Outlook

Mike Greco, Fisheries Scientist, stated that the September and October 2018 blue crab survey showed the Young of the Year (YOY) index at 14.5, which was the highest index since 2006. The 2018 blue crab commercial harvest estimate based on the 2017 YOY index was 3.7 million pounds. The reported 2018 commercial blue crab harvest is at 2.9 million pounds currently, but almost 40% of the landings reports still need to be entered. The blue crab commercial harvest estimate for 2019 based on the 2018 YOY index is approximately 4.2 million pounds.

Non-Agenda Item. Proposed Changes to the Shellfish Sanitation Regulation

Michael Bott, Environmental Scientist, Watershed Stewardship, stated that the proposed Shellfish Sanitation regulation change to declassify Delaware's state waters in the Atlantic Ocean, which will prohibit the harvest of bivalve shellfish in these waters, will not apply to conchs, which are the only commercially-targeted shellfish in these waters. The proposed regulation would also set a maximum oyster and clam seed size for Delaware Bay waters identical to that for Inland Bays aquaculture of 25 mm for oysters and 15 mm for clams. Finally, the regulation would add seagrass beds as Prohibited Shellfish Harvesting Areas. The Delaware Fishing Guide has listed that clamming cannot occur within seagrass beds and this addition would make the Prohibited Shellfish Harvesting Area classification consistent with the Fishing Guide's restriction of clamming in seagrass beds. A public hearing regarding the proposed regulations will be held on January 17, 2019 at 6pm in the DNREC Auditorium.

Agenda Item 6. Topics & Tentative date for the next meeting

Chairman Voss stated that the next meeting will be scheduled for fall of 2019 and suggested the following agenda items:

1. Further discuss the possible restructuring of the Shellfish Advisory Council, including the number and qualifications of Councilors.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:32PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Hoover

Rebecca Hoover
Recording Secretary

